DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 685 CG 019 141

TITLE Guidance and Counseling: Ensuring the Rights of Students.
INSTITUTION New York State Education Dept., Albany. Div. of Civil Rights and Intercultural Relations.
PUB DATE Dec 85
NOTE 7p.; A paper based on this document was presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association for Counseling and Development (Los Angeles, CA, April 20-23, 1986).
AVAILABLE FROM Occupational Education Civil Rights Technical Assistance Unit, N.Y. State Education Dept., Albany, N.Y. 12234.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Counseling; Career Development; *Career Guidance; *Counselor Role; *Educational Discrimination; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; School Counseling; *School Counselors; School Guidance; Social Discrimination; *Student Rights

ABSTRACT

Guidance counselors believe that all students, regardless of sex, race, handicap, or national origin, have an inherent right to make informed career decisions, and to manage their own lives. A variety of barriers sometimes prevent the realization of this ideal for women, minorities, handicapped persons, and ethnic groups. Counselors must address these barriers to occupational equity. These barriers include negative beliefs, cultural blindness, white male standard, occupational stereotypes, limited role models, lack of occupational skills, lack of career management skills, inadequate counselor preparation, weak career guidance programs, little adult guidance, discriminatory employment practices, and biased materials. Activities which may prove useful to address barriers include: (1) increasing counselors' awareness of cultural differences; (2) analyzing enrollment data to identify disproportionate enrollments in vocational programs; (3) ensuring that counselors can communicate with limited-English and hearing-impaired students; (4) training counselors to identify and remedy discriminatory career guidance practices; (5) reviewing career guidance materials for stereotypes; and (6) developing an affirmative action program for employing minority and handicapped counselors. State and federal laws and regulations require districts to implement a combination of career development and career guidance activities to overcome barriers to occupational equity. (A publications list and a resource list are included.) (ABL)

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# VOCATIONAL EQUITY

December 1985

Occupational Education Civil Rights Technical Assistance Unit
Division of Civil Rights and Intercultural Relations
The New York State Education Department



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## GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING: ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF STUDENTS

Guidance counselors believe that all students, regardless of sex, race, handicap or national origin, have an inherent right to make informed career decisions, and to manage their own lives and careers. A variety of barriers, including historical patterns of discrimination, sometimes prevent the realization of this ideal for women, minorities, handicapped and ethnic groups.

Therefore, counselors must recognize and address those practices which subvert the career development process of minorities, the handicapped and persons interested in an occupation that is nontraditional for their sex. To ensure and protect the rights of these special groups, counselors must address these barriers to occupational equity.

### BARRIERS

- Negative Beliefs: Special groups are victims of unfavorable beliefs. These include beliefs that certain racial and ethnic groups lack ambition and motivation; that women are less competent, objective, independent and logical than men; that handicapped and limited-English proficient students can't benefit from guidance and counseling.

- Cultural Blindness: There are failures in recognizing and respecting cultural differences in values and life styles, and the importance of family and community influences on individual career choices.

- White Male Standard: The white, Anglo-Saxon male serves as a common model in the U.S. Persons who do not fit the White, Anglo-Saxon male model are devalued, and women, minorities, and the handicapped are directed toward more restrictive career objectives than white, male, non-handicapped students with similar abilities and interests.

- Occupational Stereotypes: The stereotyping of special groups is a major problem. It results in acting on the expectations that women, ethnic and racial groups, and handicapped persons naturally gravitate toward a narrow range of occupations, and that certain handicapping conditions automatically screen people out of certain occupations. Stereotyping leads to the use of race, color, national origin, gender or handicap as a basis for advising or directing students to enter a career or program.

- Limited Role Models: Many special group students have access to a limited range of occupational role models. The absence of role models for special groups restricts career aspirations and goals.

- Occupational Skills: Some members of special groups lack marketable occupational skills which are in demand. Too many are limited to dead-end entry occupations.

- Career Management Skills: Members of special groups often lack the skills to manage careers (e.g., decision-making, job seeking, interviewing, job adjustment and advancement).

- Counselor Preparation: Some pre- and in-service counselor education programs ignore problems and issues of gender, race, handicap, and culture in career guidance, and fail to provide counselors with counseling techniques and practices to meet the guidance needs of special groups.

- Weak Career Guidance Programs: Often career guidance programs are not targeted to the needs of women, racial and ethnic minorities, the handicapped, and the limited-English proficient. Goals, objectives, and activities may be nonexistent or inappropriate. Some programs lack direction, adequately trained staff, and are not coordinated with school and community resources serving special groups.

- Adult Guidance: There are few career guidance services for out-of-school youth, adults, displaced homemakers and teenage parents.

- Employment Practices: Recruitment, hiring, and promotional practices still exist which discriminate on the basis of race, sex, handicap, ethnicity, marital and family status, and age. A counseling practice which contributes to this inequity is the referring of students for work study or job placement to employers who discriminate.

- Biased Materials: Stereotyped or biased materials such as handbooks, pamphlets, curriculum goals, interest and aptitude tests create or perpetuate discrimination in career counseling.

## ACTIVITIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

Activities which may prove useful in addressing the preceding barriers include the following:

- Increase counselors' awareness of cultural differences in life-styles, language, and values. Train counselors to meet the educational, financial, health, job choice, job placement and job adjustment needs of women, minority, handicapped and limited-English proficient persons.

- Analyze enrollment data to identify whether vocational programs disproportionately under - or over-enroll male, female, minority or handicapped students.

- Ensure that counselors-either themselves or through interpreters-can communicate with limited-English proficient and hearing-impaired students.

- Train counselors and other guidance personnel to identify and remedy discriminatory career guidance and counseling practices.

- Assess the career needs of minority, handicapped, and female students; use the findings as a basis for organizing guidance staff and resources to meet these needs.

- Include goals, objectives and activities in district guidance plans to address the career needs of handicapped, minority, female and limited-English proficient students. Implement activities to eliminate sex, race, handicap, and ethnic stereotypes.

- Analyze group guidance and counseling sessions to determine if counselors are advising or directing students into careers on the basis of their race, sex, national origin or handicap.

- Implement a developmental career guidance program to meet students' needs at the career awareness, exploration, preparation and work-entry stages.

- Reach out to special population students and parents. Inform them about their educational rights and how to use occupational education and guidance services in the school and community.

- Seek out minority, female and handicapped role models from occupations traditionally not held by these groups for career days, exploratory experiences, and to serve as mentors and advisors.

- Provide support to students enrolled in courses that are nontraditional for their sex, race, national origin, or handicap through counseling and consultation with teachers, peers and parents.

- Use group guidance sessions on resume writing, job interviewing, decision-making, financial aid, educational/career planning, and on-the-job adjustment to help students in identifying and developing solutions for overcoming discrimination.

- Extend career guidance services to adults, out-of-school youth, displaced homemakers, the disadvantaged and teen-age parents.

- Help students to examine their life-styles and cultural values in relation to career goals in order to anticipate and resolve value conflicts.

- Review career interest and aptitude tests, career and career guidance materials for stereotypes. Avoid the use of tests where there are questions of validity.

- Coordinate activities with other school and community resources and agencies serving minority, female, handicapped and limited-English proficient students.

- Develop and implement an affirmative action program designed to recruit and employ minority and handicapped counselors, and to ensure that counselors of both genders are part of the guidance staff.

- Establish an equity advisory council (which includes the district's Title IX and Section 504 coordinators, minority and handicapped students, their parents, adult learners, and civil rights advocates) to obtain advice and direction for implementing a nondiscriminatory guidance program.

## STATE AND FEDERAL MANDATES

State and Federal laws and regulations require districts to implement a combination of career develpment and career guidance activities to overcome barriers to occupational equity. For example:

### New York State Requirements

Guidance and Counseling:

The Board of Regents has amended Section 100.1 of the Commissioner's Regulations to require that each school district develop a guidance program to serve all students in grades K-12. In grades 7-12, where occupational choices are made, guidance programs are required to provide:

- an annual review of each student's (including handicapped, limited-English proficient) educational and career plans;
- instruction to help students learn about various careers and career planning;
- assistance to enable students to benefit from the curriculum (occupational as well as academic); and,
- help to develop and implement postsecondary education and career plans.

Career Exploration:

New courses noted in Part 100 of the Commissioner's Regulations have been designed to help all students in grades 7 and 8 develop an understanding of fields such as production, transportation, construction, communications and agriculture as well as understand their opportunities as consumers and wage earners. These courses, entitled "Technology, Home and Career Skills," complement career guidance activities and provide an information and experience base for decision making, and problem solving. Again, the participation of minority, handicapped and limited-English proficient students is required by Federal civil rights regulations.

### Federal Requirements

The Commissioner's Regulations are reinforced by Federal civil rights statutes and regulations which prohibit discrimination in counseling services on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap, and by the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act which ensures access to vocational education for special groups in vocational education.

Civil Rights in Vocational Education:

To assist school districts in understanding Federal civil rights requirements as they apply to the local occupational program, the State Education Department compiled the document Standards Governing Civil Rights in Vocational Education Programs and disseminated it to all school districts in New York State. Of particular importance is Section IV of the Standards, entitled Guidance and Counseling Programs. This section addresses counseling on the basis of ability, counseling materials and practice; counseling activities resulting in disproportionate enrollments; counseling limited-English proficient students; and, counseling students with hearing impairments. Should a district's practical arts, or vocational program disproportionately enroll male or female, minority or non-minority students, or handicapped students, the district must evaluate its guidance and counseling program to determine if its counseling practices contributed to the over- or under-representation of students by sex, race, national origin or handicap and correct the discrimination in counseling activities.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act:

A major aim of this law is to make vocational education programs accessible to handicapped, limited English proficient, and minority students. Districts applying for funds under this act must guarantee access to members of groups that have been traditionally under-represented such as racial and ethnic minority groups, women, handicapped persons, and limited-English proficient students. This act gives districts the opportunity to take a proactive approach in recruiting students from special groups and to provide comprehensive career guidance services. Funds are available to support projects which improve access to vocational education programs to these special populations, and to assist districts in implementing remedies to overcome violations of Federal civil rights laws.

## PUBLICATIONS


- "Vocational Education Programs Guidelines for Eliminating Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Sex and Handicap," Federal Register, Vol. 44, No. 56, Wednesday, March 21, 1979.
- Standards Governing Civil Rights in Vocational Education Programs. The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234, April 1982.
- A Counselor's Guide to Vocational Guidance Instruments, editors, Jerome T. Kapes, Marjorie Moran Mastie, National Vocational Guidance Association, Falls Church, Va. 22041, 1982.
- District Guidance Plans Implementing Commissioner's Regulations 100.1 (g), Guidance and School Psychological Services, New York State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234, 1982.
- Guidebook for Vocational Education for the Handicapped, by G. Susan Grey. The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department, Office of Occupational and Continuing Education, Albany, New York 12234, 1981.
- Proceedings of a Multi-Cultural Colloquium on Non-Biased Pupil Assessment. Bureau of School Psychological and Social Services and Bilingual Education Unit. The State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234, 1977.

- Sex-Fair Interest Measurement: Research and Implications. The National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C. 20208, April 1978.

- Classroom Activities to Combat Stereotyping in Career Choice. American Institute for Research, P.O. Box 113, Palo Alto, Cas. 94302.

- Career Behavior of Special Groups, J. Steven Picou and Robert E. Campbell. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., Columbus, Ohio 43216, 1975.

- Guidance Programs for Pupils with Handicapping Conditions. Bureau of Guidance. The State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234, 1976.

## RESOURCES FOR COUNSELORS

- New York State Association for Counseling and Development, 17 Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207 (518) 463-1822 (Includes interest groups and individuals to address minority concerns, sex bias, guidance for handicapped, testing).

- American Association for Counseling and Development (formerly American Personnel and Guidance Association) 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22304 (703) 820-4700. Contact the following divisions of the AACD at the preceding address for publications, research and consultants:

    - Association for Multi-Cultural Counseling and Development

    - National Career Development Association

    - Assocation for Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development.

- Division of Pupil Services, Bureau of Guidance, New York State Education Department, Albany, NY 12234 (518) 474-6943.

## MORE HELP

Assistance with bias-free career counseling and other guidance issues related to educational equity can be obtained from:

Occupational Education Civil Rights Technical Assistance Unit
New York State Education Department
Room 471, EBA
Albany, New York 12234
(518) 474-0585